

**Washingtoniana Division
D.C. Community Archives**

Guide to the Capital Bicycle Club Collection, 1880-1929

**Collection No. 57
8.5 linear feet (10 boxes)**

November 2002

**D.C. Public Library
Washingtoniana Division
D.C. Community Archives
901 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
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Guide to the Capital Bicycle Club Collection

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PROVENANCE

The original donor of the photographs in the collection is not specifically identified. Part of the collection consists of photographs transferred from the Washington, D.C. Historic Image Collection. Other photographs have a stamp on the back reading "Public Library November 16, 1951, Washingtoniana", and few others in Series I are stamped with "Clarence G. Allen, The Ontario. Apt. 601. Tel. Col. 800". Clarence G. Allen was an active member of the Capital Bicycle Club. A scrapbook in Series II was created by the D.C. Public Library and charts the activities of the Capital Bicycle Club from 1891-1929.

HISTORY

On January 31, 1879 Herbert S. "Bert" Owen, Max Hansmann, F.D. Owen, L.P. Einolf, F.G. Wood, L.N. Jessunofsy, and Chas. Krauskopf founded the Capital Bicycle Club on the steps of the United States Capitol. Incorporated on May 6, 1886 and the third club of its kind in the United States, the Capital Bicycle Club used its motto of "Swiftly and Silently" to affect public perception of the new transportation device by working with local officials on bicycle safety measures. Major Thomas P. Morgan of the D.C. police department was an honorary member of the Club. As part of Club rules, members were instructed to use bells during the day and lamps at night to avoid collisions with pedestrians. Such measures secured local rights for Club members, and wheelmen in general, while influencing new municipal bicycle policies across the United States.

The members were overwhelmingly professional men who devoted much time and money to bicycling. The Club held its first meetings in member homes, but growth caused club members to rent a space on 10th Street, N.W. near H Street. In 1880 the Club moved to 412 11th Street, N.W. In 1882 the Club moved to 919 G Street, N.W. for two years until the federal government bought the building for office space. In response, the Club decided to finance the construction of its own building at 409 15th Street, N.W. Ground broke on May 18th 1886.

Club members organized many expeditions throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia including a tour of the Natural Bridge in 1882 and a tour of Cabin John Bridge in 1884. Individual members were nationally recognized for advanced riding techniques, including Herbert S. "Bert" Owen, founding member and the Club's first Captain, for being the first man to ride down the United States Capitol steps on a bicycle. The Club also participated in collegial races. On June 29, 1880 the Club's first annual races were held at Iowa Circle and by 1883 the Club laid a track at Athletic Park at 9th & S Streets, N.W. The Athletic Park was the site of the 5th Annual League of American Wheelmen Races on May 20, 1884.

Although bicycling was the main focus of Club members, social activities included banquets, a bicycle debating society, and a camera club, which sponsored America's first photography salon the "Washington Salon and Art Photographic Exhibition" in 1896. The most prolific photographer of the Club was founding member and 1884 Captain, Max Hansmann who employed the cyanotype development method popular in the 1880's, which produced brilliant Prussian blue prints. Max Hansmann's efforts left a vibrant pictorial record of the Club's activities and accomplishments.

The Club remained active until about 1912 when the clubhouse was moved from 409 15th Street, N.W. to 1347 Pennsylvania Avenue. Active participation ceased and the old clubhouse at 409 15th Street, N.W. was torn down in 1927. Surviving members continued to hold annual events including the "61st Capital Bicycle Club Birthday" held on January 31, 1940.

"A Tour to the Natural Bridge" *The Wheelman* August 1883

"The Capital and the Capital Club" *The Wheelman* November 1883

Delaney, Michele Anne. "The 1896 Washington Salon and Art Photography" *American Art Review* v. ix, no.1, 1997: 110-115.

PROCESSING PROCEDURES

General processing procedures included: covering each photograph in a protective plastic Mylar cover; interleaving the scrapbooks with buffered tissue paper to resist acid migration; and covering of record books with buffered tissue paper to contain red rot. The Memorabilia and Official Records series are arranged chronologically by date and type. The Photograph series is arranged by date and event following the imposed order of negative number as a chronological guide within individual folders. Those items without a discernable date are placed at the end of each folder and box, except where type clearly indicates an earlier date such as in Series I, Box 3. Photograph credit and type as well as negative number are noted when available. Cyanotypes are generally separated by type within folders, except when duplicate images exist to maintain order.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection contains 147 items of the Capital Bicycle Club from 1880-1929. There are 126 photographs, two scrapbooks, and five record books. The photographs concentrate on the Club's events with heavy documentation of the 5th Annual League of American Wheelman Races on May 20, 1884 and Herbert S. "Bert" Owen's Birthday Run on May 7, 1888. There is a large assortment of member portraits from the 1880's by professional photograph studios. Examples of founding member Max Hansmann's use of the cyanotype development method popular in the 1880's can be found throughout Series I. The two scrapbooks span the years 1880-1929 and the assorted clippings contain original magazine articles from *The Wheelman* and Club member L. Warren Seely's original manuscript for the "Presentation of the Cat". With the motto "Swiftly and Silently", the "sacred cat" served as the club's official mascot. The "Presentation of the Cat" traces the cat's origin and distinguished history of service throughout the ages. A pictorial documentation of the "Procession of the Sacred Cat", held in 1887, can be found in Series I. The "scared cat" is pictured with club members dressed in lively and creative

costumes. The record books, which include correspondence, meeting minutes, and other official records, begin in October of 1881 and end in July of 1911.

COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The majority of photographs in the collection are in the public domain, but it is the responsibility of the user to obtain copyright permission from photographers and photograph studios listed in the guide.

The collection is arranged into the following series:

Series I: Photographs

Series II: Memorabilia

Series III: Official Records

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I: Photographs, 1 linear foot (1882-1890)

The series consists of photographs of the Capital Bicycle Club and its members from 1882-1890. The series is arranged chronologically by date and event featuring both group and individual shots. Club members Clarence G. Allen, L. Warren Seely, Herbert S. "Bert" Owen, and Max Hansmann are prominently featured. The reverse of the photographs notes members, dates, locations, and specific activities. The 5th Annual League of American Wheelmen Races on May 20, 1884 and Herbert S. "Bert" Owen's Birthday Run on May 7, 1888 were photographed heavily. The "Procession of the Sacred Cat" on February 22, 1887 features some very interesting photographs of club members in costume. Max Hansmann was the primary photographer for the club and applied the popular cyanotype development method to many of the photographs, which gives them a blue tint. Cyanotype photographs are noted in the folder description along with available corresponding negatives from the Washington, D.C. Historic Image Collection. The series also contains reproductions of the club's original photographs by the *Star* newspaper for an article documenting the club's history printed sometime in 1926, which include two mounted rotogravures. Rotogravure is an early photomechanical process of printing photographs in newspapers. A copy of the *Star* article can be found in the collection's vertical file.

Series II: Memorabilia, 3.5 linear feet (1880-1929)

The series consists of scrapbooks and assorted clippings, papers, and programs of the Capital Bicycle Club and its members from 1880-1929. Box 1 contains the club's official scrapbook from 1880-1890 with Box 2 containing a scrapbook prepared by the D.C. Public Library spanning 1891-1929. Each scrapbook is chronologically arranged by date and contains clippings, prize ribbons, and programs. Both scrapbooks had been assigned a catalog number by the Washington, D.C. Public Library of Wash.Ref.796-606c244r. Of special note is founding member L. Warren Seely's original manuscript for the "Presentation of the Cat", circa 1883. A corresponding transcript is included in the series from *The Republic's* January 27, 1883 issue. The "Sacred Cat" served as the

club's official mascot with the "Procession of the Sacred Cat" held on February 22, 1887. Photographs of the "Procession of the Sacred Cat" can be found in Series I.

Series III: Official Records, 4 linear feet (1881-1911)

The series consists of the official records of the Capital Bicycle Club from 1881-1911. A list of officers for each year is included in the records as well as the club's official meeting minutes as recorded by the Secretary. Box 3 contains copies of the Executive Committee's official correspondence from 1886-1890. Like the scrapbooks in Series II, each record book was assigned the catalog number of Wash.Ref.796-606c244r by the Washington, D.C. Public Library.

BOX INVENTORY

Series 1: Photographs

Box 1

Natural Bridge Tour, September 1882

- C. Allen, M. Hansmann, L.W. Seely (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 14020)
- C. Allen, M. Hansmann, L.W. Seely (photograph by Max Hansmann, duplicate, negative 14020)
- C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 14028)
- C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann (photograph by Max Hansmann, duplicate, negative 14028)

Small mounted photo prints of Natural Bridge Tour, September 1882

(photographs by Max Hansmann, no negative)

Clubhouse, 919 G Street, N.W., 1882-1884

Exterior group shot (photographer unknown, no negative)

League of American Wheelmen, Washington Athletic Park, 9th & S Streets, N.W., May 20, 1884

- "The Collision" (photographer unknown, negative 6336)
- Polo Games (photographer unknown, negative 6337)
- LAW Races (photographer unknown, negative 6338)
- "The Stack" (photographer unknown, negative 6339)
- "The March" (photographer unknown, negative 6340)
- LAW Races (photographer unknown, negative 6341)
- LAW Races (photographer unknown, negative 6342)
- 1 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6343)
- 3 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6344)
- "Finley fancy riding on Star" (photographer unknown, negative 6345)
- "Finley fancy riding on Star – Backward in Saddle" (photographer unknown, negative 6346)
- "Finley & Chickering on Star – Head Down" (photographer unknown, negative 6347)
- "Finley & Chickering on Star" (photographer unknown, negative 6348)

“A Shooting Star” Rex Smith riding down Capitol Steps (photographer unknown, negative 6349)
“Parade of the Capital Club – The March” (photographer unknown, negative 6350)
“Finley fancy riding on Star” (photographer unknown, negative 6351)
“Finley fancy riding on Star (before steering rod on one foot)” (photographer unknown, negative 6352)
5 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6353)
1 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6354)
3 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6355)
10 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6356)
5 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6357)
“Parade of the Capital Bicycle Club – The Stack” (photographer unknown, negative 6358)
3 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6359)
1 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6360)
25 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6361)
“LAW Parade Review in front of Arlington Hotel” (photographer unknown, negative 6362)
“LAW Parade, May 1884, Capital Bicycle Club parading in front of Arlington Hotel” (photographer unknown, negative 4086)
10 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6363)
25 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6364)
“Close Quarters” (photographer unknown, negative 6365)
Unknown (photographer unknown, negative 6366)
1 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6367)
“Rex Smith riding on one wheel standing in saddle” (photographer unknown, negative 6368)
1 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6369)
3 Mile Race (photographer unknown, negative 6370)

League of American Wheelmen, Washington Athletic Park, 9th & S Streets, N.W., May 20, 1884

(Cyanotypes)

“Club Races” (photographer unknown, negative 7558)
“The Finish” (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 7562)
Unknown (photographer unknown, negative 7563)
“The Finish” (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)
Unknown (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)

Cabin John Bridge, 1884

C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 9233)
C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann (photograph by Max Hansmann, duplicate, negative 9233)
C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 9290)

Will Robertson and Rex Smith on Capitol Steps, 1884

Will Robertson (photographer unknown, negative 154620)
Rex Smith (photographer unknown, negative 8068)

Portrait of Herbert S. "Bert" Owen, circa 1885

"First man to ride down Capitol Steps" (photographer unknown, negative 9227)

Capital Outing to Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, August 1885

Group shot, Clubhouse 919 G Street, N.W. (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 9289)

New Clubhouse, 409-15th Street, N.W., May 18, 1886

(Cyanotypes)

Group shot, "Site of new clubhouse" (photographer unknown, no negative)

Group shot, "Laying the clubhouse cornerstone" (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)

Group shot, "Setting the Keystone of Arch" (photographer unknown, no negative)

Group shot, "Laying corner stone" (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)

Procession of the Sacred Cat, February 22, 1887

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6374)

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6376)

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 8250)

Group shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)

Box 2

Herbert S. "Bert" Owen's Birthday Run, May 7, 1888

"Entering Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6294)

"Entering Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 6294)

"Entering Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6295)

"Entering Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 6295)

"The Crowd – Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6296)

"The Crowd – Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 6296)

"Ready for Bert Owen's Birthday Run: he at head of line" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6371)

"Ready for Bert Owen's Birthday Run: he at head of line" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 6371)

"Start from Capital Bicycle Club's House" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)

"The Crowd – Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6372)

"The Crowd – Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 6372)

"The Start" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6373)

"The Parade – Brightwood" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6375)

"The Celebrated Cow-Boy Band" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6378)

"The Crowd – Cosmopolitan Club Park" (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6379)

“Follow-my-leader - Followers in trouble” (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 7559)
“Follow-me-leader – No trouble for Bert” (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 7560)
“Follow-my-leader – A follower in trouble” (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)
Unknown (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 7938)
“Follow-my-leader – A follower in trouble” (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 7984)
“Follow-my-leader – The Ravine” (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)
“Follow-my-leader – The Ravine” (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, no negative)

Capital Bicycle ClubHouse, 1889

Exterior shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, cyanotype, negative 154419)
Exterior shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 154649)
Hall and Reading Room of Clubhouse (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)
Exterior shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)
Exterior shot (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6511)

Portraits – 1880’s

Wallace Crossman, n.d. (G.W. Davis Photograph Studio, negative 824)
Herbert S. “Bert” Owen, n.d. (The American Photographic Studio, negative 1190)
Unknown, n.d. (Gen. Prince Artistic Portraits, negative 6320)
Abner Y. Dunnington, n.d. (Clinedinst Studios, negative 6321)
Unknown, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 6322)
Unknown, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 6323)
Clarence G. Allen, n.d. (G.W. Davis, negative 6324)
W.F. Morsell, n.d. (Rice Studio, negative 6325)
E.H. Fowler, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 6326)
George Ruoff, n.d. (Rice Studio, negative 6327)
C.H. Wilkins, 1883 (photographer unknown, negative 6328)
J. West Wagner, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 6329)
Geu. A. Warren, 1884 (N.Y. Photo Co., negative 6330)
Portrait unknown, n.d. (Johnson Bros. Studios, negative 6331)
Portrait unknown, n.d. (E. Glenton Studio, negative 6332)
Portrait unknown, n.d. (G. W. Davis, negative 6333)
Portrait unknown, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 6334)
John Sevinborne, 1881 (G. W. Davis, no negative)
Howell Stewart (signed), 1883 (Cabinet Portrait Studio, no negative)
Warren Seely, 1883 (G.W. Davis Studio, no negative)
T.F. Schmuder (signed), 1885 (Lardner & Co., no negative)
Warren Seely, 1888 (Bodie Photographic Art Studio, no negative)
Rex Smith (signed), n.d. (New York Photo Company, no negative)
Fred Shaffert, n.d. (C.M. Bell Artist, no negative)
P.M. Harris (signed), n.d. (Pronner Photo, no negative)
E.H. Shipton, n.d. (Owen Studio, no negative)
Elmer D. Sharretts, n.d. (Rice Studio, no negative)

Box 3

“On night train from Hagerstown, Maryland”, n.d. (photograph by Max Hansmann, no negative)

Unidentified outing, n.d. (photographer unknown, negative 7561)

Star, Evening and Sunday, circa 1926

(Rudolph Kauffmann reproductions)

C. Allen (G.W. Davis, negative 6324)

Portrait unknown (no negative)

C. Allen, L.W. Seely, M. Hansmann, Natural Bridge Tour (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 14028)

Duplicate, (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 14028)

Cabin John Bridge (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 9233)

“The Celebrated Cow-Boy Band” (photograph by Max Hansmann, negative 6378)

Mounted *Star* rotogravures, circa 1926

Herbert S. “Bert” Owen’s Birthday Run (photograph by Max Hansmann, duplicate, negative 7560)

“Capital Bicycle Club in review in front of Arlington Hotel” (photographer unknown, negative 6382)

Series 2: Memorabilia

Box 4

Capital Bicycle Club Scrapbook, June 1880 - January 1890

Box 5

Papers & Clippings of Capital Bicycle Club, Scrapbook organized by Washington Public Library, October 3, 1891 – January 31, 1929

Box 6

Assorted clippings and articles, 1882-1883

Newspaper notices of Natural Bridge Tour, 1882

“A Tour to the Natural Bridge” *The Wheelman*, August 1883

“The Capital and the Capital Club”, *The Wheelman*, November 1883

“Columbia Bicycle Prize Cup” clipping from *The Wheelman*, n.d.

“Presentation of the Cat” transcript from *The Republic*, January 27, 1883

L. Warren Seely manuscript “Presentation of the Cat”, circa 1883

Programs, 1890 and 1892

Eleventh Anniversary Banquet of Capital Bicycle Club, January 31, 1890

Leap Year Entertainment, February 29, 1892

Assorted papers, 1892-1940

Ticket to Annual Excursion to Marshall Hall and Indian Head, July 26, 1892

Directory, May 6, 1907

Dinner list, January 15, 1929

List from Max Hansmann's stationary for "61st Capital Bicycle Club Birthday" on
January 31, 1940

Blank membership certificate, n.d.

Exhibit sign with labels, n.d.

Series 3: Official Records

Box 7

"T: Record", October 1881 – April 1884

Box 8

"T: Record", May 1884 – December 1885

Box 9

"T: Record", January 1886 – October 1895

"T: Letters", January 4, 1886 – May 3, 1890

Box 10

"T: Record", May 1897 – July 1911